



## **QUARTERLY MEMBER NEWSLETTER**

December 15, 2020

**Notice: Annual Meeting of Voting Members Saturday, January 9, 2021 11 a.m.**  
(a video link will be emailed to all voting members one day prior to the meeting)

### **Notes From the Interim President:**

Just four months ago many of us met in Brightwood Park to listen to a proposal to develop a mountain bike course. This opportunity brought us together to envision a different sort of proposal – one that supports the dual purposes of preserving a nature sanctuary and answering an unmet need for hiking and walking trails. To this end, we have created Friends of Brightwood Park a NJ non-profit corporation whose mission is to restore, preserve and protect the park as a nature preserve.

FOBP members have already collectively spent over 380 hours of volunteer time in the park clearing invasive species and trash from the park. We are just beginning. We have formed a Park Health committee that is laser focused on cleaning out the park of trash and invasive plants. If you would like to learn more about the significance of native plants in our environment, we encourage you to watch the very educational and interesting Doug Tallamy, Ph.D. presentation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lnndy3bO3UE&feature=youtu.be>. FOBP's long-term goal is to restore the park with native plants and wildflower gardens that will attract butterflies, bees

and birds. You can follow our progress and volunteer for upcoming clean-up events on FriendsOfBrightwood.org under the Preserve menu.

We have developed a vision of the park that will include a broad range of educational opportunities including arts and fitness. Our Education Committee is working with Westfield's Recreation Department to offer programming for pre-schoolers through adults. Despite the challenges of Covid, the Recreation Department held its first pre-school program in November. We plan to offer yoga and pilates in the spring. As programs become available, you will find information on FriendsOfBrightwood.org under the Enjoy menu as well as through the Westfield Recreation Department.

We have begun research on the history of the park to appreciate and understand its role in our community. We have learned of residents who lived in the Big Woods and read about Noel Taylor's efforts to preserve the park. We have posted some of this history on FriendsOfBrightwood.org under the History menu.

To spread word of our efforts, we have created social media pages on Facebook and Instagram. We have incredible photographers and artists among us who have graciously allowed us to share nature on these sites and on FriendsOfBrightwood.org under the Enjoy menu.

We thank you for your interest in FOBP. Our website has recently been updated, so if you would like to become a member, even if you previously contacted us, please go back to the home page and re-sign up.

FOBP has two classes of membership: 1) regular members who receive quarterly newsletters to keep apprised of our work; and 2) voting members who, in addition to receiving the quarterly newsletter, have an opportunity to attend an annual meeting in January to vote on our Board of Directors and share in development of the direction of our organization in the upcoming year. There are no dues for regular membership. Dues for voting members in 2021 are \$25 per person. One of our member photographers has offered to print a nature photo for any voting member who would like one. Information on this offer is found on the member only page under the More menu.

If you would like to be kept informed about specific activities, please be sure to mark the appropriate boxes when you sign up. We welcome you on this adventure to help restore and preserve this precious natural asset.

Peace,  
Denise Ricci  
Interim President

## **Park Health Committee:**

### **Park Clean Ups**

FOBP held several clean up days in September and October, including one in conjunction with the Westfield Green Team. FOBP showed up in force with about 30 members on each occasion.

Volunteer groups spread out over the park to collect trash, bottles, household waste, and other debris left over from many years ago. We filled a 40-yard dumpster in one weekend and filled dozens of contractor-sized trash bags on other occasions. FOBP coordinated with the Westfield DPW to remove all the collected trash. More clean-up days will be scheduled in the coming year, Covid and weather permitting.

## **Invasive Plants**

Invasive plants have invaded large areas in Brightwood Park, damaging and bringing down native trees, some hundreds of years old. These plants cover the ground and compete for space formerly covered by native species. Another team of FOBP volunteers has been working to eradicate these species (Wisteria, Japanese Knotweed, Amur Honeysuckle) by clear cutting them. The Japanese Knotweed infestation had become so severe in the area near the parking lot that it totally blocked the view of the pond. Due to FOBP efforts, the beautiful view of the pond was restored in September.

This work will be an on-going long-term project in order to keep these and other invasive species in check. Since the FOBP started the cleanup and invasive species control work in September, FOBP members have donated 381 hours of volunteer labor to help improve the park. This huge amount of donated work has made a significant improvement to Brightwood Park, both in terms of trash removal and invasive species control.

## **Education Committee:**

To further the mission of Friends of Brightwood Park to promote educational opportunities in the park, the Education Committee is working on long- and short-term goals for activities for all ages. FOBP is partnering with the Westfield public schools, the Scouts, the Westfield Art Association and the Westfield Recreation Department to offer nature and environmental classes for preK through high school students, wellness classes for all ages and art programs.

## **Nature Programming**

As a pilot program, FOBP coordinated with the recreation department on November 18 to offer PreK classes for 2-5 year olds and their families. The program, "*Who Lives in the Park? Trees and Animals of Brightwood Park,*" introduced the children and parents to Brightwood Park as a home for trees and animals. Participants were thrilled with the opportunity to get their children an experience in nature. Building on this success, the recreation department will offer a series of classes with FOBP volunteers in 2021.

## **Wellness**

FOBP is excited to announce more educational/recreational additions to the park coming in Spring 2021. In collaboration with the Westfield Recreation Department, FOBP will offer adult and children's fitness and movement classes right in the park! These classes will offer everyone a great way to get outside, move their bodies and explore the beauty that the park has to offer. Classes

will include, Adult Yoga, Pilates and Fitness. Children’s Yoga as well as dance and movement classes.

### **Art in the Park**

We plan to have a celebration of en plein air painting with the Westfield Art Association May 1st, and are working on a Youth Photography Contest for ages 12-17 with entries due to Vickie Williams by June 30th. Prizes will be given for the top three entries in the photography contest with winning photos displayed on our website.

FOBP’s Education Committee is committed to bringing the beauty of Brightwood to more of the greater Westfield community and providing opportunities to learn about and enjoy this nature preserve. Keep an eye on the Westfield Recreation Department as programming gets rolled out!

### **History Corner:**



**"IF WILL, HE'EN MU"** — Samuel Jarvis, 76, of 1224 Parkwood Ave., Westfield, says, "I don't know what I'm going to do" if Brightwood Park plans are approved and he has to leave the house that has been his home for 40 years. (Courier-News Photo by Fred Kneising)

### **The Mystery Steps and Foundations of Brightwood Park**

Before Brightwood was the nature preserve that we all love, it was part of the “Big Woods.” If you walk through the nature trails, you will see remnants of old houses here and there. FOBP member, Rob Lombard, as well as the Westfield Historical Society and the mayor’s daughter, Grace Brindle, have been researching the families that lived there. Research has included old deeds, military records, census data, and street directories. African American families lived in almost all of the 23 homes in the park.

The front-page article from the April 13, 1964 Courier News (available on FOBP’s website) featured one of the residents, Samuel Jarvis. In a moving story printed on the eve of the Westfield Town Council’s action to authorize acquisition of the land for the proposed Brightwood Park, Samuel Jarvis worried about where he would go.

Samuel Powell Jarvis was born August 20, 1887 in Jacksonville, Florida to Charles and Fannie Queen Jarvis. He had an older brother Frank and a younger sister Florence. As was the case with many of the African-American residents who eventually lived at the future site of Brightwood Park, the Jarvis family migrated to New Jersey sometime before 1900. Charles worked as a hotel

porter, and his sons, Frank and Samuel worked as waiters. Sadly, Charles Jarvis died at the age of 61 in 1915.

In his 1919 WWI draft registration, Samuel listed his wife as Clara and indicated he had a child. His home address was in Jersey City, but he worked as a waiter at the Breakers Hotel in Atlantic City. Samuel served six months in the U.S. Army and was stationed at Fort Dix.

In 1921, Samuel's mother, Fannie, purchased 1118 Fanwood Avenue, located on the northeast corner of Fanwood and Netherwood Avenues in Westfield. That home remained in the Jarvis family for the next 47 years, as home to Fannie and, at various times, to her three adult children and her grandchildren. Samuel's brother, Frank, passed away in 1953. Fannie conveyed the home to Samuel in 1954. She passed away in 1958.

Facing the threat of a condemnation action by the Township, Samuel Jarvis sold his home to the Township in 1968 for \$4,000 retaining the right to remain in his home until his death. It is believed, but not confirmed, that Samuel Jarvis died in 1976. Samuel's sister, Florence, died in 1980, survived by four children, eleven grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren, and nineteen great-great grandchildren.

The steps of 1118 Fanwood Avenue where Samuel Jarvis sat for the 1964 news story remain – as depicted in the photo. If you are interested in seeing this historical step, look for it off the path from Fanwood Avenue on what was once Netherwood Avenue.



FOBP continues to research the families of the Big Woods. Look for more history in upcoming newsletters.

## **Winter Proofing Your FOBP Lawn Sign**

The Save Our Sanctuary lawn signs are FOBP's biggest single PR tool that lets the town administration know just how many residents want to protect and save our hiking trails from destruction by replacing them with the proposed mountain bike trails. Unfortunately, with winter coming on, as they stand now, the signs are in jeopardy.

The top of the signs are open to the weather, so water is able to get into the core of the signs when it rains. This is not a problem in the warmer months, since the sign core material is water resistant. When water freezes however, it expands by 9%, and if this expansion happens inside the core of a lawn sign, it could rip the sign in half.

The fix for this problem is quite simple however, and only takes a minute. Just take a strip of clear shipping tape, and run it over the top of the sign, sealing the sign from water intrusion in the rain. With that simple fix, our signs should make it through the winter with no problem, continuing to let the town council know how many people want the park protected.

## **Annual Meeting of Voting Membership – January 9, 2021 11 a.m.**

Voting members will vote on the Board of Directors and help set the direction of FOBP for 2021. The interim board of Directors include:

**Kate Browne Pindilli** has lived in the Brightwood section of Westfield with her husband and two children for almost thirty years. She is an attorney who attended St John's University School of Law and has spent her entire career in the insurance industry.

**Trudy Burke** has been a dentist in Westfield and Scotch Plains for 30 years. She has advanced training in Maxillofacial Prosthodontics from M.D. Anderson Cancer and Tumor institute and the University of Texas in Houston Texas. She has played in Brightwood Park with her husband, children and grandchildren since 1986. Even though ice skating on the lake and cross-country skiing through the park is now rare, she has seen many generations of families enjoying the wildlife and sharing the surprises of discovery in Brightwood's natural treasure.

**Karrie Hanson** thought she might become a limnologist (lake scientist) at an early age, but chemistry, then engineering, then electrochemistry (batteries for EVs), and finally inventing & building internet services got in the way. After a PhD at the University of California at Berkeley, she was a researcher at Bell Labs/AT&T Research for 33 years. She is enjoying merging almost all of these interests in the Brightwood Project. She is also a member of the Westfield Green Team and the Downtown Westfield Corporation Economic Vitality committee, and has volunteered in Westfield for many years including leading the Porch Preservation zoning change and the restoration of the Reeve House for the Historical Society. She is married to Ben Greene and mom of three daughters.

**Jim Lewis** has enjoyed many years walking in Brightwood Park and now even more so during the pandemic. He has spent quite a bit of time there recently with his two pre-school grandsons. Jim is an avid hiker, mostly in the Adirondack Mountains in New York State. He has a degree in Environmental Science from Rutgers and has completed the course work for the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Environmental Stewards program.

**Leslie Lewis** has been an active resident of Westfield for 38 years and Brightwood Park has been one of her joys in this community. She has enjoyed walking in the park and sharing nature with

her children and now her grandchildren, in that serene setting. Leslie is an avid hiker, spending time in the Adirondacks climbing, hiking and kayaking with family and friends. She is a lifelong educator, with degrees from Rutgers University, and was a teacher in Westfield and the director of Holy Trinity Preschool.

**John “JPL” Linderman** is a slow - and getting slower - moving outdoors enthusiast. JPL is a frequent visitor to nearby Brightwood Park; a less frequent visitor to National Parks and Forests in the West, Alaska and the Adirondack High Peaks; and a daily attendee at Khan Academy. He is interested in way too many things to be much good at any of them. JPL has three math and computer science degrees from MIT and worked at Bell Labs in NJ for 39 years.

**Rob Lombard** was raised in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, DC. He attended Columbia College, where he majored in architectural history and urban planning. Rob continued these same interests over his working career of 40 years. He and his wife Rosemary have lived in Westfield for over 39 years, raised their three adult children here including almost daily walks through Brightwood Park, and are now enjoying their retirement here, especially their six grandchildren, travelling a bit, and volunteering their time.

**Lloyd Marks** One of the treats for Lloyd in Westfield is to spend time in Brightwood Park. He has spent countless hours walking with his wife Janice in the park, and exploring alone as he photographs the beauty all around. He has met many interesting people there from whom he has learned a lot about bird watching and the history of the land as home to African American Westfielders. When he learned of concerns about the park during the Master Plan process, he knew he had to get involved with Friends of Brightwood Park. On the website of FOBP, he offers for free prints of his photos taken in Brightwood.

To the Board, he brings a love of the park as well as his professional abilities and experience. He is a retired pediatric cardiologist, an MIT educated engineer, an inventor holding many patents, and a business consultant with an MBA. He has served on professional boards and been active mentoring engineering students at MIT and Rutgers.

**Judy Milloy**, originally from Canada, has been a resident of Westfield since 2004. She is an avid hiker having hiked many destinations including the Grand Canyon from rim to rim. She loves spending time in Brightwood Park and credits the park as a key factor in her home selection. Judy earned her BSc from McGill University in Microbiology and Immunology in 1981 and her MBA from the University of Toronto in 1987. She spent 35 years working in the pharmaceutical industry in Canada, Singapore and the USA. Her area of interest and the focus of her career has been cancer therapy where she worked on many in market brands as well as helping to bring new cancer therapies to market including the new immunotherapies. Judy retired from Merck in 2016 allowing her more time to enjoy Brightwood Park.

**Suzanne Pinto** has been a resident of Westfield for twenty-two years. She is a retired Mental Health Counselor/Social Worker and was Director of Early Education Pre-School at The Compass Schoolhouse (formerly the Westfield Cooperative Nursery School) for six years. Suzanne is a certified yoga instructor and has been a Grief and Bereavement Volunteer at Imagine for 4 years. She is a nature enthusiast and an avid hiker in both local and national parks.

**Kevin Redden** is an avid nature photographer who enjoys the town's parks and their photo opportunities – especially those in Brightwood Park. He has long worked to improve conditions and control invasive vegetation in both Brightwood and Mindowaskin Parks. He contributes a good amount of volunteer time not just to the FOBP, but also to the N.J. Bald Eagle Project, and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.

**Denise Ricci** has been a near daily visitor of Brightwood Park for over twenty years. She has a passion for the park as a refuge from the stresses of everyday life. She is an avid hiker who has experienced trails in our National Parks as well as those in Canada, Galapagos, and Europe. A retired attorney, she graduated from the University of Notre Dame Law School (too many years ago to mention).

**Philip Round** has been a resident of Westfield since 1985. He is trained in botany, zoology and chemistry specializing in plant pathology. He is a keen horticulturalist and worked in global agricultural industry for more than 20 years and in licensing in the pharmaceutical industry for 19 years before retiring. In recent years he has been involved with the control of invasive plants in the Great Swamp, Watchung reservation and Brightwood Park.

**Manette Scheininger** is a long-time resident of Westfield who resides in The Brightwood area. She is a retired fashion executive who focused on building iconic brands such as Calvin Klein and Maidenform. She led new business strategies through design driven growth, innovative marketing, and supply chain management. She is well respected for her ethical and decisive leadership. A Cornell university alumni, Manette holds both a MS in Textile Science and Marketing and a BS in Textile Design and Science. She is a multi-media fine artist who enjoys the tranquility and beauty of Brightwood Park.

**Janice Siegel** has enjoyed walking in Brightwood Park since she moved to Westfield more than 25 years ago. She's spent wonderful times; in the Winter trudging in the snow mesmerized by sparkling icicles forming chandeliers among the trees, in the Spring smelling the sweetness of new growth; in the Summer when the canopy was a relief from the heat of the sun; and in the Fall when the colors and the cool air are perfect for feeling good to be alive. This year it became clear that effort, loving care, is needed to make sure Brightwood Park continues to be a wonderful space to feel free in nature in Westfield. Janice's passion for the park and her knowledge of what she could contribute to accomplishing the goal drove her to serving on the Board of Friends of Brightwood Park. No stranger to environmental issues, Janice litigated a wide variety of environmental cases as a trial lawyer with the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, and as a plaintiffs' class action attorney in private practice. Her experience also includes service on boards of directors for non-profits, and leadership in environmental work as the Chairwoman of the Environmental Law Committee of the Philadelphia Bar Association.

**Vickie Williams** has always made it a priority to live near the woods. Watching nature develops sensibilities in us that connect us to the cycles of the seasons and an appreciation for nature's pace. Brightwood Park is a place of quiet serenity and beauty that nourishes it's visitors as they

walk through it. It is treasured by all ages. Vickie wishes to protect the park for future generations. Environmental education is essential for our world to regain health. Each generation needs to learn about and appreciate trees, ponds, insects, woodland birds and animals. There are few undisturbed habitats left in suburban NJ, and our Brightwood Park is a treasure. Vickie is a painter, a retired preschool and art teacher at Holy Trinity School, and a member of the handbell choir at the Presbyterian Church in Westfield. She is married to Don and has two grown sons. Vickie has a BA in Fine Arts from Colgate University and an MA in Student Personnel Administration from Teachers College, Columbia University.

The following members are running for 1, 2, and 3-year terms as indicated:

1 year term:

JPL Linderman, Denise Ricci, Karrie Hanson, Janice Siegel, Lloyd Marks

2 year term:

Suzanne Pinto, Judy Milloy, Rob Lombard, Kevin Redden, Vickie Williams

3 year term:

Kate Browne, Jim Lewis, Leslie Lewis, Trudy Burke, Manette Scheininger, Phil Round

### **FOBP Strategy for 2021:**

To achieve our vision for Brightwood, we must develop our collaborative relationship with the town of Westfield to ensure a focus on education and passive recreational activities in the park. On November 6, 2020 FOBP directors met with the town administration and Ward 1 Council members Linda Habgood and Jim Boyes. From that meeting, our dialogue explored how FOBP could work with the town:

1. Develop a list of projects to fulfill our mission and improve the park; and
2. Establish funding sources for projects in collaboration with the town.

Since our meeting, we have identified the following short term and long-term projects for the town to consider:

### **Short Term Needs:**

- Working aerators/bubblers and treatments for the ponds to be addressed by Spring 2021 and treatments as needed during the year as provided for other ponds in town parks;
- Continued collaboration between FOBP and the DPW for invasive plants and trash removal;
- Removal of large items: including refrigerators, water heaters, and miscellaneous surface metals;
- Clean-up debris in area between the parking lot and pond by late Spring/Summer 2021 after invasive plants are under control and in preparation for plantings to avoid erosion; and
- Bench repairs.

### **Long Range Planning:**

- Budgeting for long term control of invasive plant species;
- Implementation of recommendations as to invasive plants and protection of the undisturbed areas as made in the September 2008 Rahway River Association Stewardship Plan and recommendations within the Brightwood Park Ecological Mapping Report of September 2020 and Michael Van Clef's Full Tour Report/Stewardship Plan Update 2020;
- Fencing repairs, gates, and grates as recommended in the September 2008 Rahway River Association Stewardship Plan and recommendations within the Brightwood Park Ecological Mapping Report of September 2020 and Michael Van Clef's Full Tour Report/Stewardship Plan Update 2020;
- Study the junction area between the two ponds; evaluate the water flow over the pathway and develop solution to flooding; evaluate impact of adjusting height of pipe connection between the two and potential impact of silt flow;
- Budget for native tree and shrub planting with protective fencing and after-planting maintenance; investigate and apply for possible grant money from Union County available to re-establish native understory;
- Budget for wildflower and rain gardens and investigate and apply for possible grant money from Union County;
- Study feasibility of ADA accessibility to the pond junction from the parking area;
- Study feasibility of security monitoring to prevent illegal dumping at the park; and
- Development of a recycling demonstration plot similar to one at the Great Swamp for educational purposes;
- Small information station at park entrance.

FOBP proposes to continue work in the park:

- Continue trash clean-up and cutting down of invasive species;
- Continue collaboration with the Recreation Department to bring educational, passive recreational, and artistic opportunities for all ages;
- Paint trail blazes on nature trails for hiking;
- Develop themed hikes in the park such as historical hikes with a focus on the community that had lived in the park and educational hikes with a focus on invasive species and native plants;
- Develop informational and educational signage.

At our January 2021 annual meeting, we will discuss how FOBP should move forward in these regards and set our priorities for the park.

We wish you all a healthy and safe holiday season! Take a moment to appreciate nature.

*Friends of Brightwood Park*